



Creating an Innovative Visual Aid to Help Communicate the Importance of Early Detection

Public Health Problem

In Idaho in 2002, an estimated 900 women were diagnosed with breast cancer, and approximately 200 women died of breast cancer.

Evidence That Prevention Works

Studies show that early detection of breast cancer and a comprehensive follow-up program save lives. Timely mammography screening could prevent 15% to 30% of all deaths from breast cancer among women over the age of 40. Studies show that early detection is the best protection against breast cancer deaths. When breast cancer is diagnosed at a local stage, 96% of women are still alive 5 years later. If the cancer spreads regionally, this rate is reduced to 78%, and if diagnosed after spreading to distant sites, the 5-year survival rate is reduced to 21%.

Program Example

Idaho's Breast and Cervical Cancer Early Detection Program, Women's Health Check, developed an innovative way to teach women about breast cancer using a visual tool. The program is called "Ask Me," and it uses wooden beads to illustrate the various tumor sizes that can be detected by mammography. This visual image helps women understand the importance of getting regular exams and demonstrates how early a tumor can be detected, even when it is very small. A curriculum also was developed for the program. The program was launched in conjunction with McCall Memorial Hospital, the Idaho Breast and Cervical Cancer Alliance, and the American Cancer Society. Sorority groups, cancer centers, Idaho's Hispanic women's group, local jewelry stores, and health insurance companies implemented the program.

Implications

By using a visual aid to support its early detection message, this program illustrates the importance of early detection and screening and demonstrates the impact that a visual aid can have on promoting prevention.